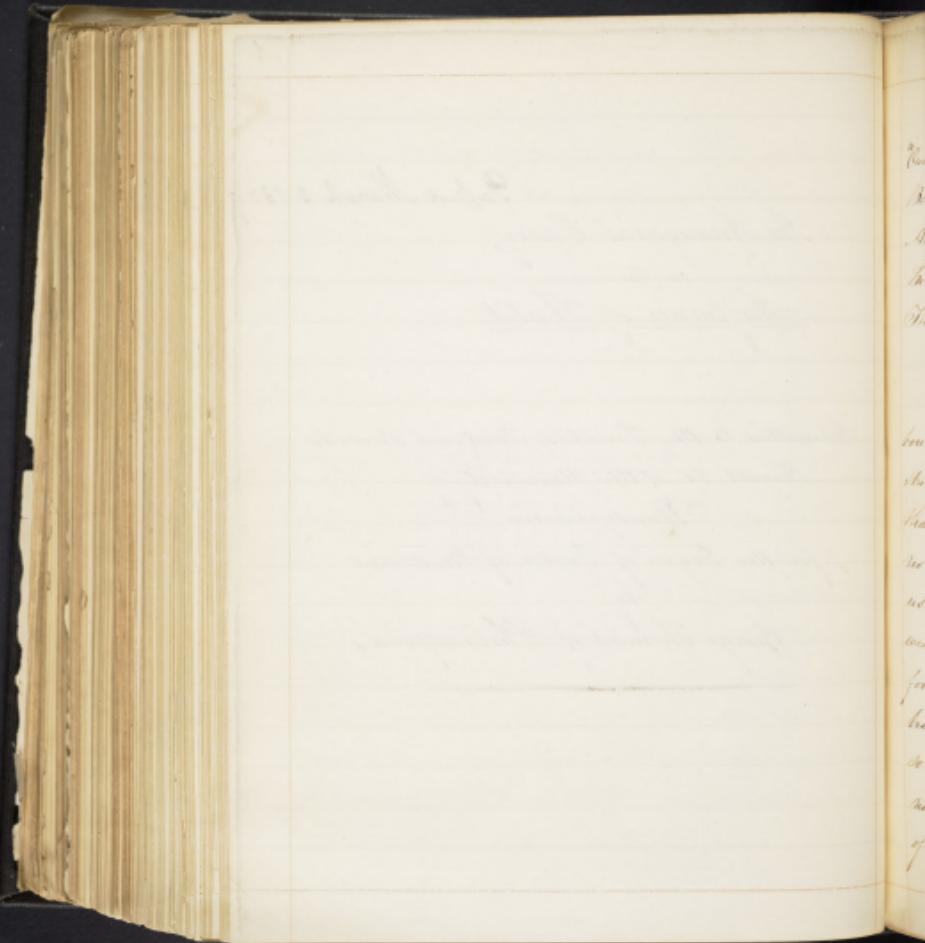


Sapd March 3 1829

An Inaugural Essay
on the
Influence of Habit.

Submitted to the Trustees, Medical Faculty
Borst Sc. of the University of
Pennsylvania
for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine
by
George Thomas of Philadelphia-



"Our torments also may, in course of time
 Become our elements; those piercing griefs
 So soft as new snow, our temper changed
 Into thin paper; which must needs remove
 The sensible of pain." — Bradwic Lost.

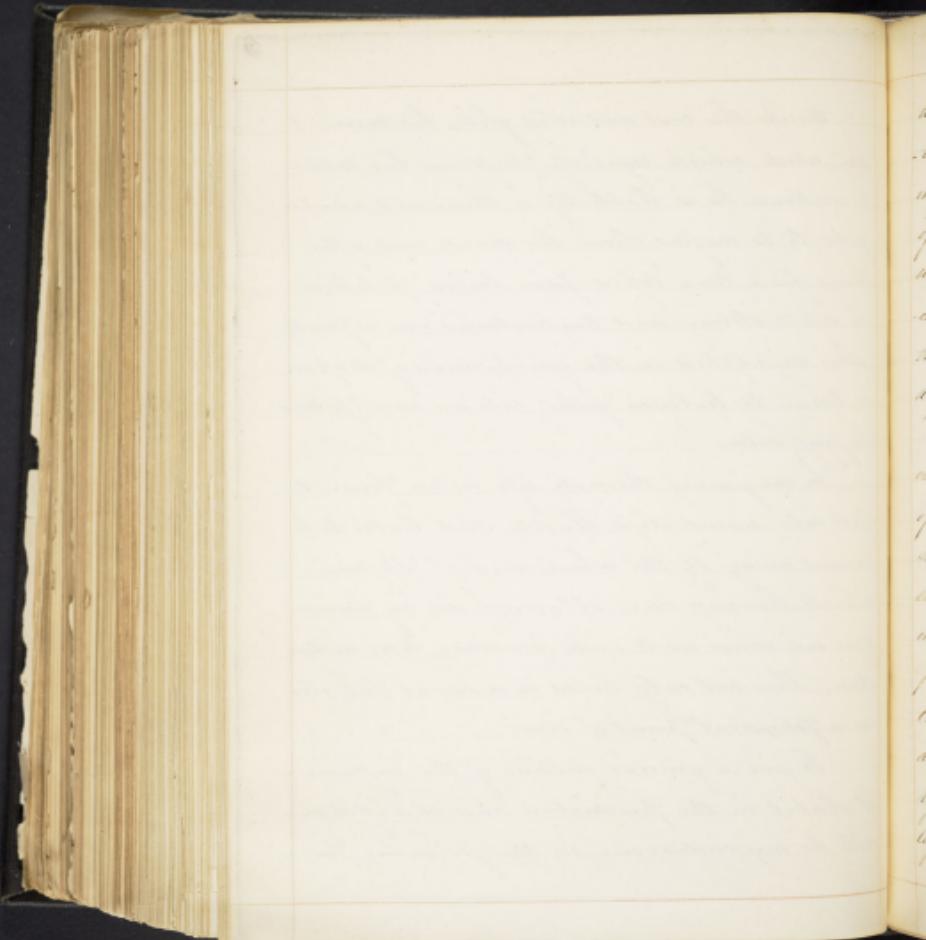
In the contemplation of the works of a
 beautiful Creator one of the first objects that
 strikes our view or merits of consideration is
 that "paragon of animals" that first and
 noblest of sublunary beings, Man for whose
 use all things earthly were formed. but how
 weak! how liable to evil! how numerous his
 foibles! and to what ends may he not be
 brought by giving loose to those qualities
 so inherent in his nature, from the most
 noble, most "like a God" to the most inferior
 of created beings.



Unlike this vast and solid globe, his moments
are, at best, which regularly performs his subtle
revolutions, he is liable to a thousand adverse
gales to be wafted from his course and after
being for a time tossed from billow to billow
on life's stormy and tempestuous sea is finally
either engulfed in the quicksands of despair
or borne by treacherous gales into an undisturbed
happy calm.

In our journey through life we are prone to
fall into numberless habits and liable to be
carried away by the whirlwind of passion,
which, having once obtained an influence
over us, cause us to rush headlong to our destruc-
tion. This not only holds in a moral but also
in a physical point of view.

To give a general outline of the influence
of habit in the production and cure of disease
will be my endeavour in the following pages



not however flattering myself with the expectation of offering anything new on this very important and interesting subject but that of collecting together a few facts culled from the writings of medical men, which have presented themselves to my mind while pursuing those interesting branches necessary to the acquirement of medical knowledge.

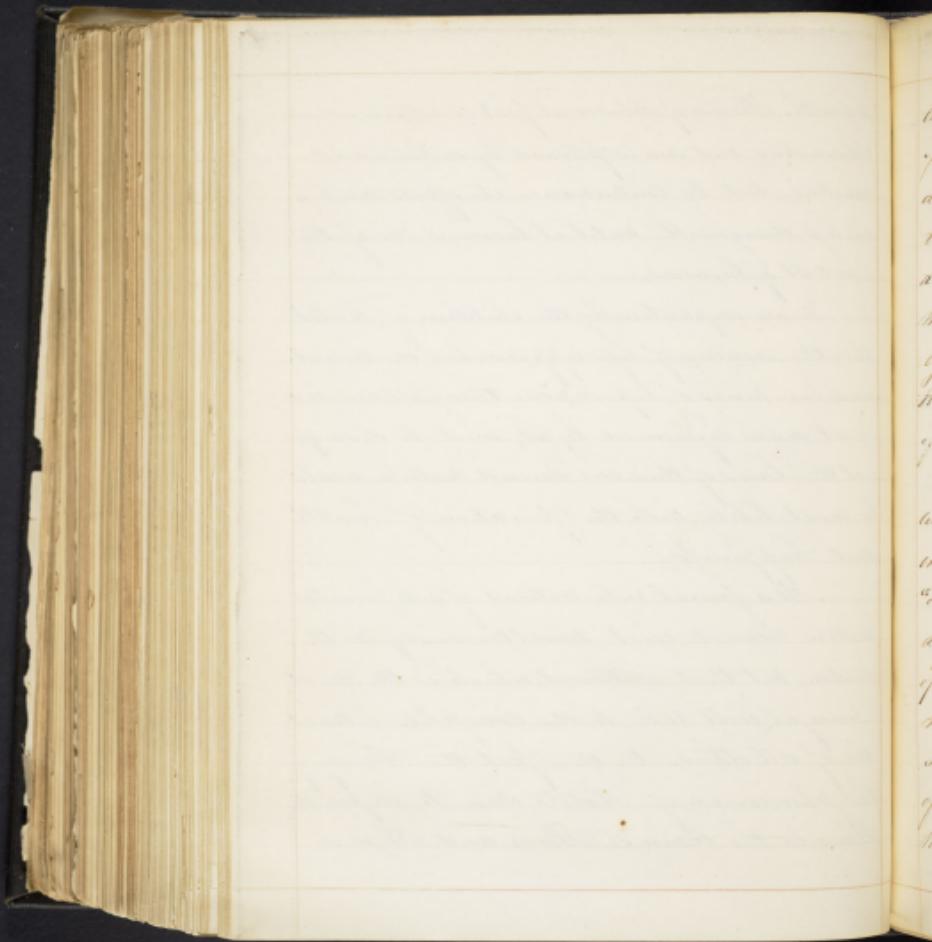
Habit may be defined the effect custom or frequent repetition has on the mind or body of man or according to Retzius it may be said "to consist in the account repetition of certain acts or certain motions in which the whole body participates or only some of its parts." The multiplicity of impressions that may act on the human frame, though at first unpleasant and disagreeable, by repetition or custom produce effects less & less injurious, until they become indispensible.

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to health. The use of Tobacco at first is both pleasant & disgusting, and soon it follows by sickness and vomiting, but by continuance its effects on the body and life disagreeable until it becomes one of the greatest of injuries.

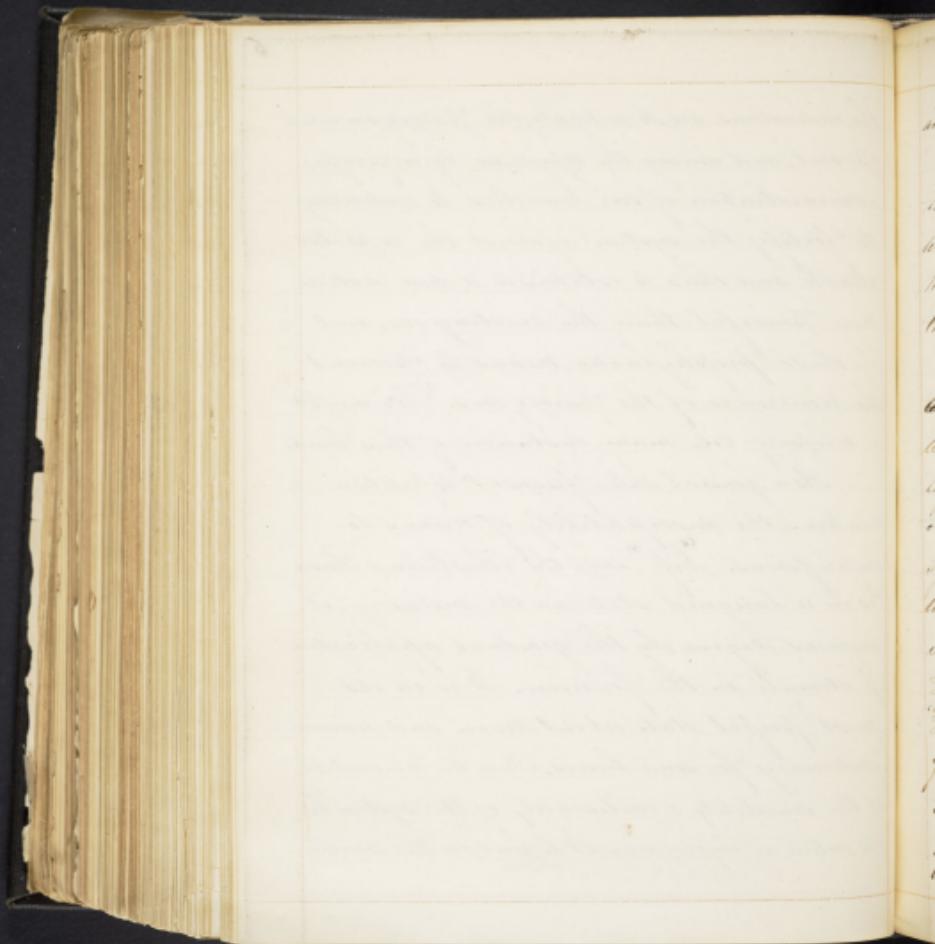
It is emphatically the child of Habit. When the covering of life approaches our sensations, our hours, & life, & our thoughts, are in a great degree influenced by it, and to dispossess the laws of this, our second nature would be most likely with the generation of Health and Happiness.

As a general rule actions of a like similar nature cannot exist simultaneously in the system, but that vicelement, which is the most powerful will rule to the compleat extirpation of all others. On this fact the theory of the phenomena of Habits seem to depend. Thus in the common Poor and Goods.



the indications are to mitigate the Paroxysm while present, and during the Apathy by a proper administration of our Remedies to endeavour to fortify the system against the expected attack, and thus to establish a new action more powerful than the existing one, and by these prophylactic means to prevent the recurrence of the Paroxysms. We might give many instances of this kind.

As a general rule, Accustoming to repetition weakens the susceptibility of organs to impressions. Life says the illustrious Pestalozzi in a languid state in the morning; it acquires vigour by the gradual application of stimuli in the forenoon. It is in its most perfect state about noon and remains stationary for some hours. From the diminution of the sensibility & excitability of the system to the action of impressions it becomes in the evening

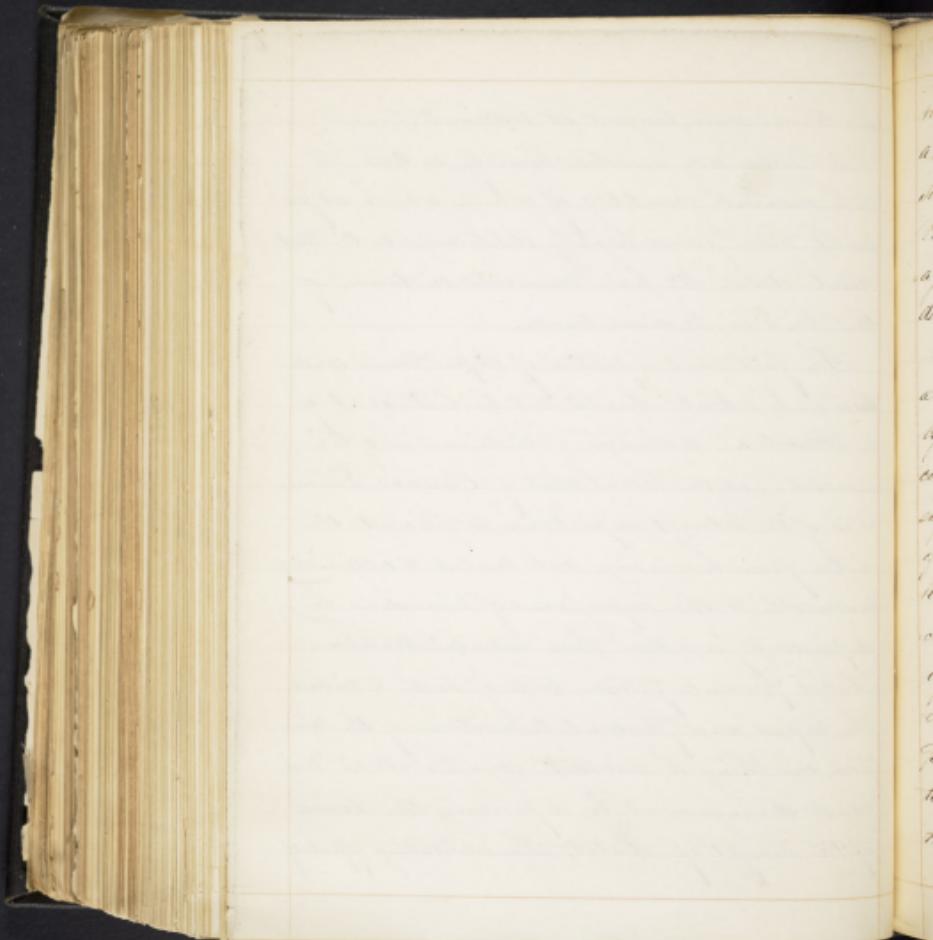


and becomes again languid at bed-time."

A person may accustom himself so long to take immense quantities of articles which at first would have proved highly deleterious, to the most natural taste. We have numerous instances of this kind in Medical works.

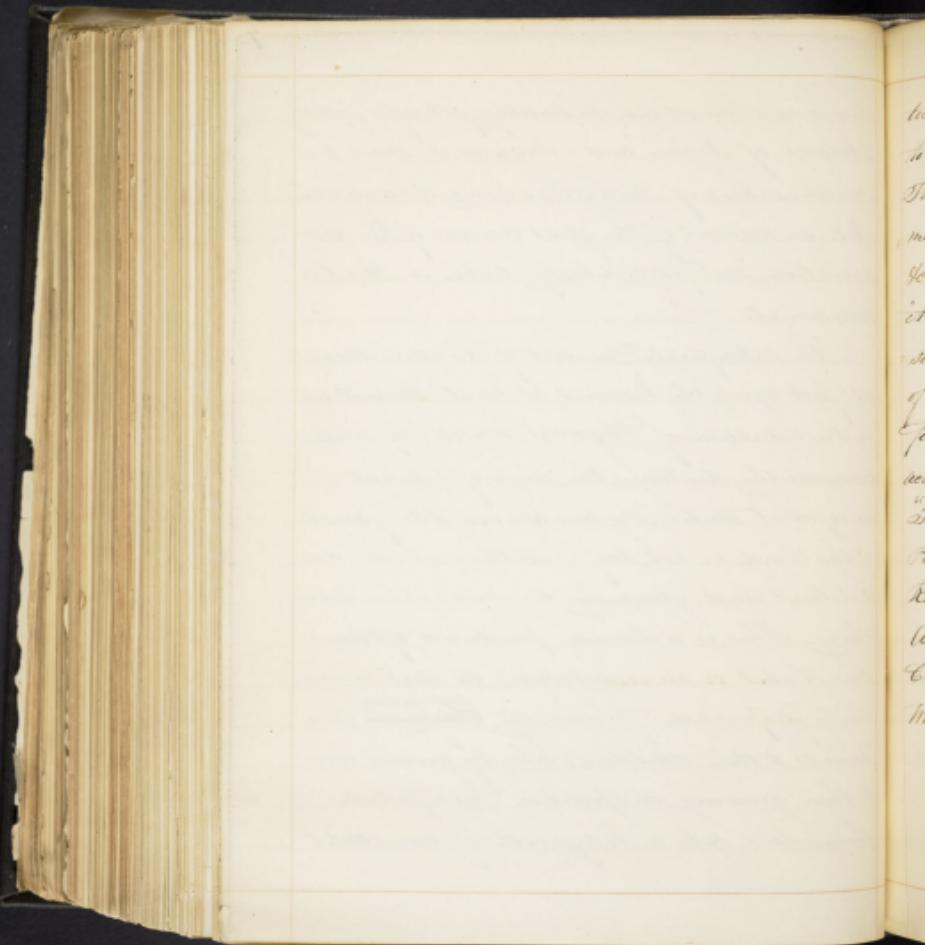
The fact that a patient of impulsive habits, whom we expect, should not be best suited to the Doctor & - a change of physician is often required. In the Treatment of Chronic Diseases, it is of the utmost importance to prevent the system from becoming habituated & ultimately insensible to the impressions of remedies by suspending for a time their administration.

Habit forecloses action both of body & mind. "The rapid and violent transitions of the mind from one thing to another" says Dr. Rush "will cause derangement by depriving the brain of the benefit of rest." The debilitating effect of



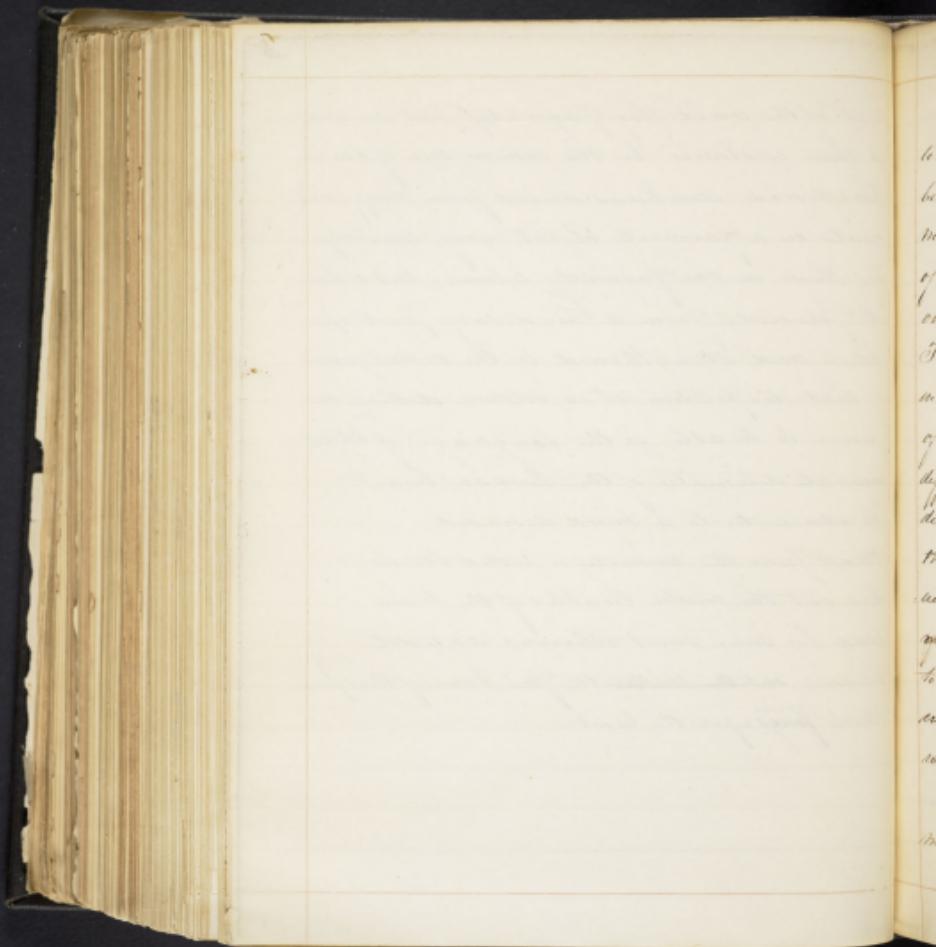
These sudden transitions are sensibly felt after perusing
a volume of Novels and Magazines, hence we
sometimes hear of Booksellers being deranged.
Buts on account of the great exercise of the im-
agination are particularly liable to Mental
derangement.

The intemperate pursuit of pleasure though
at first agreeable becomes at length disgusting
by the reduction of Physical sensibility and
consequently destroys the state of rational
judgment until by over heating the faculties
of the mind it not unmercifully ends in an
habituual and generally an incurable Malad-
ie. This is a disease produced either
by Habit or an indulgence in that melan-
cholic disposition frequently ~~derived~~^{depending} from
Parents to their children; who, by giving loose
to their growing disposition precipitate
themselves into a labyrinth of care & mal-



lived of the world have frequently found an end
to their existence by the consumption of Strife.
This disease sometimes arises from disappoint-
ments in a favorite object, grief, anxiety,
etc., these we can vaguely believe; but when
it proceeds from a hereditary predispo-
sition and strengthened by the indulgence
of that disposition it is seldom within our
power to be able in the language of that
accurate delineator of the human heart,

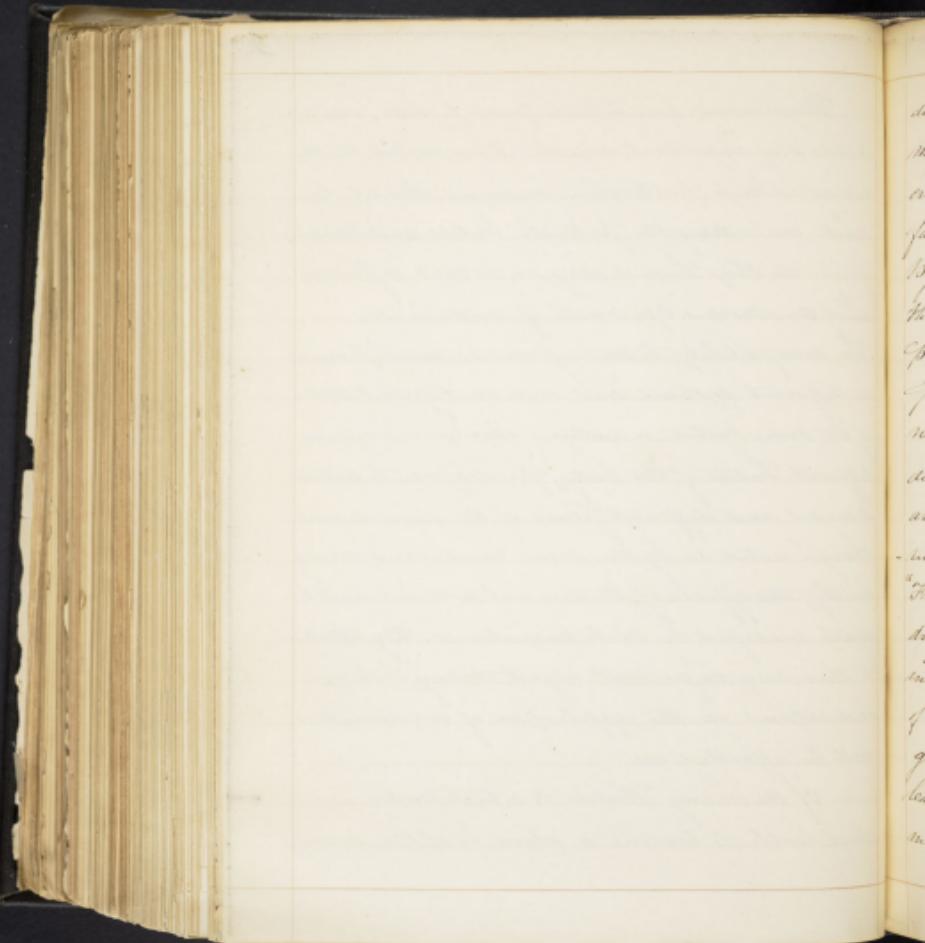
"To administer to a mind diseased
Ruck from the memory a rooted Strow
Rase out the winter boulders of the brain
And by some sweet oblivious date date
Cleanse out the ~~winter~~^{stuff} the foul bosom of that mind
Which ^{weighs} upon the heart."



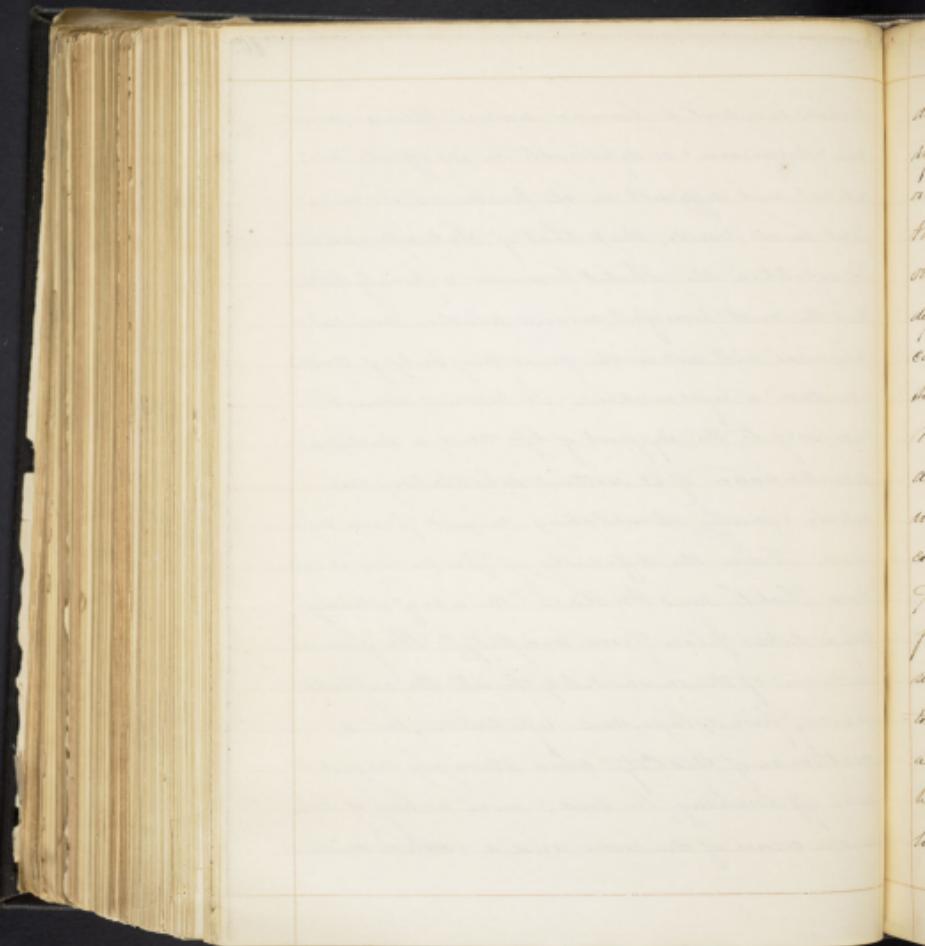
Physicians have hitherto paid little attention
to this very important subject. When called to the
bed of sickness particular inquiries should be
made concerning the patient's habits and manners
of life as they have a very important influence
on the *Modus Operandi* of medicines.

The susceptibility to impressions is much varied
in different systems and even in different states
of the same system or rather, idiosyncrasies or
different habits of the body, predispose to certain
diseases and different forms of the same disease
though acted on by the same cause, and conse-
quently the effects of medicinal articles will be
much modified by such variations. By attention
to this very important object many valuable
indications in the application of our remedies
will be afforded us.

Of the many habits to which man is
most liable to become a slave or of the many



diseases incident to human nature, there is none more pernicious or deplorable in its effects, more critical and difficult in its treatment, or more fatal in its results, than that of Intemperance. By repetition the Habit becomes so firmly rooted that the most powerful means whether mental or physical will not in the great majority of cases produce a reformation. It becomes almost necessary to the support of life and a sudden discontinuance of it without substituting an article equally stimulating might prove injurious. Hence the difficulty of producing a true "From Habit," says Dr. Rush "the use of strong drink takes place from necessity." He gives an instance of the insensibility to all the attractions of love, friendship, and reputation, in a gentleman of this City; when strongly urged to leave off drinking, he said, were a king of Rome in one corner of the room and a common constable



discharging walls between me and it I could not
restrain from laughing before that Cannon in
order to get at the Ram. In the treatment of
this disease of the liver the Dr recommends
stimulating and tonic remedies preceded by
depletion and a situation where they will be
compelled to use their wills in order to escape
from great and painful scolds.

Nauseating medicines conmingled with the
accustomed fiction, may have a good effect
in creating a disgust for the liquor and
consequently a disease. Habits of aversion are
produced by any slight degree of disgust
frequently reiterated and will often continue
with life. Religious invocations have some-
times been of use. In the treatment of this
as well as all other diseases a great deal may
be done by the Physician by obtaining by
his conduct the good opinion, confidence



and respect of his Patients, as that will effect a great deal in producing cures especially in diseases of the mind. We are informed by Paracelsus, that the great father of medicine Hippocrates, considered himself as much indebted to the high opinion his Patients entertained of his honour and ability for the many surprising cures he performed as to his knowledge of Medicine.

In the catalogue of Diseases there are many which, though at first arise from certain causes are continued in time through the influence of Habit after the original cause has long ceased to act. A change of Habits are consequently indicated.

Chronic diseases are greatly benefited by change of scene & climate, sea voyages &c. Mineral Springs are much celebrated for their efficacy in the cure of complaints of long standing.

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not on account of there being any very baneful qualities in the waters, but in a great measure owing to the change of scene, hilarity of mind, the salubrity of the Country and being impressed with the idea of the water being an infallible cure for their complaints; the imagination has much to do with it, hence in recommending travelling, something ought to be said in view of the mind to dwell upon.

Gastritis has of late become a very common disease and one which requires much care in the treatment. Patients with this complaint frequently get into the habit of using spirituous liquors to alleviate some of its distressing symptoms. The glass affording so much comfort, it may be repeated till the patient becomes a habitual drunkard; instances of this kind are frequent occurrences. It should never be prescribed while we have articed equally

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good without profaning the voice of the Government.
The Physician that would recommend it
would be highly culpable - Dr Parkes on his first
going to London to study, in conversation with Dr
Jefferys, heard the Dr. strongly recommend the
practice of giving Brandy and water in Systopia;
just before he left England the Dr. waited on him
privately to undeceive him, from his having seen
so many of his patients die from kidneys affected
thus recovered. As a substitute you may use
the Aromatic Spirits of Ammonia in Camomile
water, or other articles of this nature; they cannot
decidely & are slightly Stimulating. A good
practice in this Complaint is regularly to
visit the pure country, day, it will greatly
facilitate the cure.

A suspension of the accustomed Habits
of the body is an indication of disease and
we hail the return of these habits as the

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most favourable omens and on which the greatest reliance can be placed.

In Convalescence it is generally recommended to remove all spell boxes, trials &c out of the sight of the patient.

In convulsion, I must ~~trust~~ ^{safely} the kind indulgence of those who may chance to peruse these unprinted pages for the very many inaccuracies which a Tyro in Medicine must necessarily commit in so arduous an undertaking, without having the advantage of the best of teachers, Practice and Experience to direct his steps.

Finis-

